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REPORT

on the situation of women in prison and the impact of the imprisonment of
parents on social and family life
(2007/2116(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Rapporteur: Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	12
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE	17

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the situation of women in prison and the impact of the imprisonment of parents on social and family life (2007/2116(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 6 and 7 of the EU Treaty and Article 4 of the new Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, proclaimed on 12 December 2007¹, which concern the protection of human rights,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 5 thereof, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular Article 7 thereof, the 1987 European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) and the Optional Protocol to that Convention on the establishment of a system of regular visits by international and national bodies to places of detention²,
- having regard to Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, its protocols and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights,
- having regard to the aforementioned CPT, which established the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane and Degrading Treatment, and the Committee's reports,
- ☐ having regard to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners of 1957, and the declarations and principles adopted in this regard by the United Nations General Assembly,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the Council of Europe's Resolution (73)5 on Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Recommendation R (87)3 on the European Prison Rules and Recommendation R(2006)2 on the European Prison Rules,
- having regard to the recommendations adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in particular Recommendation R(2006)1747 on a European prisons charter and Recommendation R(2000)1469 on Mothers and Babies in Prison,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 May 1989 on women and children in prison³, its resolution of 18 January 1996 on poor conditions in prisons in the European Union⁴, its

¹ OJ C 303, 14.12.2007, p. 1.

² OJ C 32, 5.2.1996, p. 102.

³ JO C158 du 26.6.1989, p. 511.

⁴ JO C 32 du 5.2.1996, p. 102.

resolution of 17 December 1998 on prison conditions in the European Union: improvements and alternative penalties¹ and its recommendation to the Council of 9 March 2004 on the rights of prisoners in the European Union²,

- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0033/2008),
- A. whereas under the international and European conventions³, anyone imprisoned should be treated with respect for their human rights, and prison conditions should be in line with the principles of human dignity, non-discrimination and respect for privacy and family life and be subject to regular evaluations by independent bodies,
- B. whereas the specific needs and circumstances of women in prison should be taken into account in judicial rulings and criminal law and by Member States' penal institutions,
- C. whereas women's imprisonment reflects the position of women in society, women being confined in a system essentially designed, built and run by men for men,
- D. whereas visible measures adapted to the specific needs of women should be put in place, including the application of alternative sentences,
- E. whereas pregnant women in prison should be able to receive the required support and information and essentials for a healthy pregnancy and motherhood, in particular a balanced diet, appropriate sanitary conditions, fresh air, exercise and ante- and postnatal care,
- F. whereas all prisoners, male and female, should have equal access to health care, but prison policies should be particularly attentive to the prevention, monitoring and treatment of physical and mental health problems specific to women,
- G. whereas a mother's mental and physical health is linked to that of her child,
- H. whereas a large number of women in prison suffer or have suffered from addiction to drugs or other substances⁴ that may be the cause of mental or behavioural disorders and require medical treatment as well as appropriate social and psychological support, as part of a comprehensive prison health policy,
- I. whereas it is known today that a large number of women prisoners have been the victims of violence, sexual abuse or mistreatment by their family or partner and suffered a state of economic and psychological dependence, and that this has contributed directly to their criminal record and brought physical and psychological consequences, such as post-

¹ JO C 98 du 9.4.1999, p. 299.

² JO C 102 E du 28.4.2004, p. 154.

³ Articles 1^{er}, 3, 5 et 12 de la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme et article 1^{er} des principes fondamentaux relatifs au traitement des détenus adoptés par l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies dans sa résolution 45/111 du 14 décembre 1990;

⁴ Recommandation R (2006)2 précitée

traumatic stress,

- J. whereas prison staff should be adequately trained and have sufficient awareness as regards equal opportunities and the specific needs and circumstances of women prisoners; whereas particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable, i.e. minors and those with disabilities,
- K. whereas the maintaining of family ties is an essential means of preventing repeat offences and aiding social reintegration and is the right of all prisoners, their children¹ and other family members, and the exercise of this right is often complicated for women in particular by the scarceness and, therefore, potential geographical remoteness of women's detention centres,
- L. whereas the best interests of children should always be a consideration in decisions on whether to separate them or keep them with an imprisoned parent, bearing in mind that, in all cases, the enjoyment of parental rights by the other parent should be guaranteed, along with appropriate procedures for ensuring that emotional ties are maintained with the original family circle (siblings, grandparents and other family members),
- M. whereas, by signing the aforementioned Convention on the Rights of the Child (and other international instruments²), the States Parties undertook to guarantee all children, without discrimination and regardless of the legal status of their parents, the enjoyment of all rights provided for under the Convention, including the right to adequate health care, leisure and education, and this commitment should also apply to children living with their imprisoned parent,
- N. whereas the role of penal institutions, beyond the punishment of illegal activities, should be to aid social and professional reintegration, bearing in mind the situations of social exclusion and poverty that many prisoners, male and female, have often experienced³,
- O. whereas many women who are imprisoned are, at that point, involved in ongoing legal proceedings (abandonment, the fostering or adoption of children, divorce or separation, eviction etc.), which remain unresolved, placing them in a position of defencelessness and a permanent state of uncertainty and stress,
- P. whereas prisoners are often unaware of the social resources available to them, and, in many cases, the lack, loss or invalidity of their administrative documents (identity papers, health card, family record card etc.) prevents them, in practice, from exercising the rights enjoyed by nationals of each Member State,
- Q. whereas the increased number of women in prison is partly due to the worsening of economic conditions for women,
- R. whereas equal access for male and female prisoners to employment, vocational training and leisure activities during their imprisonment is fundamental for their psychological

¹ Article 9, paragraphe 3, de la convention relative aux droits de l'enfant précitée.

² Articles 1^{er}, 3, 5 et 12 de la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme et article 1^{er} des principes fondamentaux relatifs au traitement des détenus, précités.

³ Recommandation R (2006)2 précitée

wellbeing and their reintegration into society and the world of work,

- S. whereas the educational, training, employment, leisure and personal development opportunities available to male and female prisoners, however extensive, are not sufficient by themselves and mentoring programmes should be drawn up to facilitate prisoners' involvement in the planning and development of their journey towards reintegration,
- T. whereas women in prison should have access, without encountering discrimination of any kind, to employment, voluntary work and varied vocational training and civic education measures designed to facilitate their reintegration once the sentence has been served and adapted to job market requirements,
- U. whereas the successful social reintegration of male and female prisoners and the prevention of repeat offences depend on the quality of supervision given during the sentence and, in particular, on the partnerships established with businesses and social assistance organisations, as well as on the monitoring and social and professional assistance provided after the sentence has been served,
- V. whereas there is a serious need of gender-disaggregated, comprehensive, comparable and updated data and statistics,

Prison conditions

1. Encourages Member States to invest sufficient resources in modernising and adapting their prison infrastructures and to implement the aforementioned Recommendation R(2006)2 of the Council of Europe so that prison conditions ensure respect for human dignity and fundamental rights, in particular as regards accommodation, health, hygiene, diet, ventilation and light;
2. Repeats its call for the Commission and Council to adopt a framework decision, on the basis of Article 6 of the EU Treaty, on minimum standards to protect the rights of prisoners (as recommended, moreover, by the Council of Europe in the aforementioned Recommendation R(2006)2) and asks the Council to circulate and promote the application of the Council of Europe's prison rules for the greater harmonisation of prison conditions in Europe, including the consideration of the distinct needs of women, and set out clearly the rights and obligations of male and female prisoners;
3. Asks the Commission to include in its annual human rights report an evaluation of respect for male and female prisoners' fundamental rights and of special prison conditions for women;
4. Urges Member States and accession countries to ratify the Optional Protocol to the CPT on the establishment of a system of regular visits by international and national bodies to places of detention and asks the Council and Commission to encourage the ratification of this convention and its protocol as part of European Union external policy;
5. Underlines that compliance with national and international legal standards in the running of detention centres should be verified by regular inspections by the competent authorities;

6. Asks Member States to adopt the necessary measures to ensure the smooth running of penal institutions and the safety of staff and all prisoners by putting a stop to the situations of violence and abuse to which women and people from ethnic and social minorities are particularly vulnerable;
7. Recalls the ‘specific nature’ of women’s prisons and insists that security and reintegration arrangements aimed at women should be put in place;
8. Asks Member States to incorporate gender equality into their prison policies and detention centres and to take greater account of women’s specific circumstances and the often traumatic past of women prisoners, in particular through awareness-raising and appropriate training for medical and prison staff and the re-education of women in fundamental values by:
 - a) incorporating gender mainstreaming into data collection wherever possible to render visible the problems and needs of women;
 - b) setting up, in each Member State, an investigatory committee and permanent monitoring systems for an effective assessment of prison conditions, in order to be able to detect and remedy any aspects of discrimination still affecting women in the prison system;
 - c) highlighting in local, regional and national debates the needs of women prisoners and former prisoners to encourage positive measures in relation to social resources, housing and training etc.
9. Calls on Member States to guarantee women equal, non-discriminatory access to health care of all kinds, which should be at a standard equivalent to that provided for the rest of the population in order effectively to prevent and treat illnesses specific to women¹;
10. Recalls the need to take measures to ensure that the distinct needs of women prisoners in terms of hygiene in penal institutions and the provision of the necessary hygiene facilities are better taken into account;
11. Asks Member States to adopt a comprehensive prison health policy that allows the identification and treatment of physical and mental disorders occurring following imprisonment and to provide medical and psychological assistance to all prisoners, male and female, suffering from addictions, with respect, however, for women’s specific circumstances;
12. Asks Member States to take all measures necessary to provide psychological support to all women prisoners and, in particular, those that have been the victims of violence or mistreatment, mothers raising children alone and juvenile offenders, in order to assure them better protection and improve their family and social relations and, therefore, their chances with regard to social reintegration; recommends that prison staff should receive training on and be made aware of the particular vulnerability of these prisoners;

¹ Recommandation R (2006)2 précitée

13. Recommends that the imprisonment of pregnant women and mothers with young children should only be considered as a last resort and that, in this extreme case, they should be entitled to a more spacious cell, an individual cell if possible, and should be given particular attention, especially in terms of diet and hygiene; considers, furthermore, that pregnant women should receive antenatal and postnatal care and parenting classes of a standard equivalent to those provided outside the prison environment;
14. Draws attention to the fact that when women have healthy deliveries in prison, forced separation from the infant usually comes within twenty-four to seventy-two hours after the birth and welcomes any alternative solution from the Commission and the Member States;
15. Stresses the need for the judicial system to ensure that children's rights are respected in the consideration of matters relating to the imprisonment of mothers;

Maintaining family ties and social relations

16. Recommends that alternative penalties to imprisonment, such as community-based sentences, should be favoured to a greater extent, particularly for mothers, provided that the sentence imposed is short and the risk to public safety low, where their imprisonment could result in serious disruptions to family life, in particular if they are single parents or have young children, or are responsible for looking after dependent or incapacitated persons; underlines that the judicial authorities should take account of these factors, in particular the best interests of the child(ren) of the defendant, when deciding on the sentence; recommends, likewise, considering the possibility of adopting similar measures as those established for mothers for male prisoners with custody of children or who have other family responsibilities;
17. Underlines that the repercussions of isolation and distress for the health of pregnant women prisoners could also have harmful, or even dangerous, consequences for the child, and that these consequences should be considered very carefully in decisions to issue a prison sentence;
18. Insists, moreover, on the need for the judiciary to ascertain whether there are children to consider before taking a decision to remand a defendant in custody, and when issuing the sentence, and to ensure that measures are taken to guarantee their rights in full;
19. Asks Member States to increase the number of women's detention centres and to spread them more evenly across their territory so that it is easier for women prisoners to maintain family ties and friendships and take part in religious services;
20. Recommends that Member States should encourage penal institutions to adopt flexible rules concerning arrangements for the frequency, duration and scheduling of visits that family members, friends and others should be entitled to make;
21. Asks Member States to make it easier for families to stay in touch, in particular imprisoned parents and their children, unless this is counter to the children's best interests, by creating a visiting environment with an atmosphere distinct from that of prison in general that allows joint activities and appropriate emotional contact;

22. Urges Member States to fulfil their international obligations¹ by ensuring equal rights and treatment for children residing with their imprisoned parent and to create living conditions adapted to their needs through the provision of separate cells removed, where possible, from the ordinary prison environment, through their attendance of local nurseries or schools and through flexible and generous arrangements for outings with other family members or with child protection officials, enabling their healthy physical, mental, emotional and social development, and with suitable facilities and qualified staff to assist prisoners who are mothers with their parental responsibilities and the necessary care; recommends also that, in the case of minors residing in prison, the other parent should be able to exercise his or her parental authority;
23. Notes with regret that many of the women in prison are single mothers and they lose contact with their children, sometimes forever; asks the Commission and the Member States to deliver and implement alternative policies in order to avoid total separation;
24. Urges Member States to guarantee free legal assistance for all prisoners on matters relating to imprisonment, which, in the case of women prisoners, should be specifically geared to family law in order to address issues relating to fostering, adoption, legal separation and gender violence etc.
25. Recommends the development of awareness and information campaigns concerning local social services, as well as ongoing procedures to update personal and family administrative documents and those pertaining to health care, so that women prisoners can exercise their full rights as citizens;
26. Asks Member States to provide psycho-social treatment to ensure the best possible preparation for the separation of women prisoners from their children and to lessen the negative impact;

Social and professional reintegration

27. Recommends that Member States should adopt the measures necessary to ensure that all prisoners, male and female, are offered the chance of adequately paid and varied work that will permit their personal development, without any segregation on the basis of gender or any other form of discrimination, and, to this end, set up partnerships with companies;
28. Asks Member States to invest more resources, including through the application of Community financial instruments such as the European Social Fund and PROGRESS, for the development in prisons of lifelong literacy and education programmes and vocational training adapted to job market requirements and possibly leading to a qualification;
29. Stresses that these programmes should include language courses, including the teaching of the national language in question (or at least one of them) for the benefit of foreign prisoners, information technology courses and courses in social and professional behaviour;
30. Underlines the fundamental role of non-governmental organisations in the social and

¹ Recommendation R (2006)2 précitée.

professional reintegration of prisoners, in particular women, and therefore asks Member States to encourage the development of these organisations' activities in the prison environment, including by increasing the funding allocated to NGOs, making the conditions for access to prison by NGO members less rigid and raising the awareness of prison staff as regards the need for good cooperation with these organisations;

31. Considers that, except in cases of high risk to public safety and long sentences, greater use of semi-custodial arrangements allowing male and female prisoners to work or take vocational training outside prison walls could aid their social and professional reintegration;
32. Stresses that working conditions for male and female prisoners, in particular pregnant women and women who have just given birth, should be in conformity with national and Community legislation, and regularly monitored by the competent authorities;
33. Underlines the need to encourage the involvement of male and female prisoners in a programme aimed at professional development and social reintegration, in particular by means of a personal report and by ensuring that these efforts are assessed annually;
34. Considers it a matter of priority to ensure that, in each detention centre, male and female prisoners who so wish have access to personal guidance and mentoring for the planning, realisation and completion of their personal development and social reintegration, which should continue following their release from prison;
35. Recalls the need to apply social assistance measures, during imprisonment and afterwards, aimed at preparing prisoners for and helping them with reintegration, in particular as regards finding accommodation and employment, so as to prevent social exclusion and repeat offences;
36. Underlines the importance of maintaining and promoting male and female prisoners' contact with the outside world, including through access to the written press and to the media and through communication with social assistance bodies, NGOs and cultural, artistic and other organisations approved by the prison authorities;
37. Stresses that regular access for all prisoners to sports and recreational activities, and to artistic and cultural education opportunities, is crucial to maintaining their psychological wellbeing and improving their chances with regard to social reintegration;
38. Asks the Commission to pay particular attention to the prison population in its action programme to combat social exclusion;
39. Recommends that Member States should pay special attention to male and female prisoners of foreign nationality, in particular as regards linguistic and cultural differences, help these prisoners remain in contact with their relatives and grant them access to contact with their consulates, to prison resources and programmes, and to understandable information; also recommends that they should take into account the specificity of foreign women in the planning of prison activities, train agents for working in a multicultural context, both in and out of prison, and provide mediation services in and out of prison;

40. Asks Member States, in the aim of social and professional reintegration, to take all measures necessary to incorporate into their national legislation provisions favouring the recruitment of female former prisoners, in particular mothers raising children alone and juvenile offenders, in both the public and private sector;
41. Encourages Member States to exchange information and best practice in relation to prison conditions, in particular those for women, and regarding the effectiveness of vocational training and social reintegration measures; considers it important, therefore, to encourage and finance the involvement of the authorities and actors on the ground in the creation of innovative programmes and best practices as well as in national and international conferences and debates, as a means of providing motivation and generating positive cooperation;
42. Asks the Commission, together with the Member States to promote the carrying-out of prison-related research from a gender point of view and to fund studies on the causes of crime and the effectiveness of penal systems, with a view to improving the participation of prisoners, male and female, in social, family and working life
43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the parliaments and governments of the Member States and accession and candidate countries.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Women in Europe constitute an average of roughly 4.5% to 5.0% of the total prison population (from 2.9% in Poland to 7.8 % in Spain).

Prisons remain geared towards male prisoners and tend to ignore the specific problems of women who are a small though growing proportion of people held in prison. Main areas of concern are healthcare, situation of mothers with children and professional and social reintegration.

The inmate structure reveals that female prisoners show a high incidence of substance abuse and a great number of inmates have a history of psychological, physical or sexual abuse. Specific attention should be paid to women's health care and hygiene needs, in particular pregnant women prisoners require specialised resources and attention, in respect of diet, exercise, clothing, medication and medical care.

More than half of the prisoners in European prisons are mothers of at least one child, this percentage being particularly high in Spain and in Greece. Children who remain with their imprisoned mothers require adequate protection and care and should not suffer from any form of discrimination. Imprisonment of women can have particularly grave implications when they have been the sole carers of their children prior to imprisonment.

An additional problem is the preservation of family ties. As there are fewer prisons holding women, they may be imprisoned far away from their homes and communities, thus limiting the visiting possibilities.

Women in prison may also face discrimination with regard to access to work, education and training facilities which are often insufficient, gender oriented and rarely adapted to the labour market needs.

Given the fact that the number of women prisoners in many European countries has been increasing, sometimes even faster than the size of the men's prison population (for example in England and Wales between 1992 and 2002 the male prison population increased by 50%, while the female — by 173%¹), it has become imperative to take steps to meet the needs of women in prison.

Health care in prison.

Concerns about the health care in prison are raised in almost all the studies dealing with the living conditions of the prison population. According to international and European standards and Conventions, all prisoners, women and men, should enjoy equal access to health care services which should be of the same quality as the ones provided to the general population.

Although in some respects women and men in prison face similar health problems, there is a significant difference in the nature, intensity and complexity of the problems in the gender groups. In prison systems mostly primarily designed for men, women's health needs are often

¹ Women and the criminal justice system, Fawcett Society, 2004

not sufficiently addressed by prison policy, programs, procedures and staff. Women have additional and different needs with respect not only to hygiene, maternity care and gynaecological health but also to psychological health notably because of a greater incidence of past or recent abuse whether physical, emotional or sexual in nature.

It is therefore important to underline the necessity to provide for healthcare programmes and hygiene conditions that are adapted to the specific needs of imprisoned women and to ensure adequate training of the prison's medical staff. In addition, an integrated approach to addiction or other health problems needs to be implemented.

A. Drugs addiction

The prison population can be considered as a high risk group in terms of drug use: drug users are over-represented in prison, and an important rate of female prisoners have been sentenced as a result of drug offences (the largest part for drug possession) showing that drugs are a significant and increasing problem in the life of delinquent women¹.

However, according to a recent study, only a few European countries have developed drug treatment programmes for prisoners².

In its 2006 Annual Report³, the EMCDDA concludes that "It is now accepted that understanding gender differences in drug-related behaviours is a critical requirement for developing effective responses" and "ensuring equality of access to services and sensitivity to gender-specific issues within services are two of the key themes for developing high-quality care in this area". In the information available in 2006, national reports reveal that only four countries (France, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden) have gender-oriented specific projects for drug-using female prisoners.

B. Mental health

The prison institution as it stands is not only a poor solution to managing individuals with acute and chronic mental health diseases, but the isolative and disempowering nature of imprisonment can also be a contributor to the development of mental health diseases. Even if prison's staff is supposed to maintain order and security, prison is still a hostile environment which can affect persons who have been previously subjected of violence and abuses. Consequently, the adoption of an integrated health policy that would cover both mental and physical problems as well as the provision of psychological support to mentally ill prisoners is of paramount importance.

C. Pregnancy

¹ Training curriculum for women's prisons - health aspects, Claudia Kestermann, in "International Study on Women's Imprisonment - Current situation, demand analysis and "best practice", http://www.uni-greifswald.de/~ls3/Dokumente/Reader_womeninprison.pdf.

² Problematic drug users in prison', MacDonald M, presentation at 'Criminal Justice and Drugs, Reducing Drug Use – Combating Crime, Lessons from Other Countries on Dealing with Drug Related Offences', July 2005: <http://www.uce.ac.uk/crq/presentations/2>

³ Ibid. Special issue 2. <http://issues06.emcdda.europa.eu/en/page013-en.html>

The UN Human Rights Committee in its comments on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights notes that: "Pregnant women who are deprived of their liberty should receive humane treatment and respect for their inherent dignity at all times, and in particular during the birth and while caring for their newborn children; States parties should report on facilities to ensure this and on medical and health care for such mothers and babies."¹

Pregnant women in prison are required to be given adequate medical ante-natal and post-natal care but they may not be seen as medical priorities by poorly resourced and security conscious prison staff. The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, rule n° 23 (1) recommends that "in women's institutions there shall be special accommodation for all necessary pre-natal and post-natal care and treatment"². They also have dietary requirements, medical special needs and specialised exercise regimes, which are not sufficiently provided for in the prison environment.

Mothers in prison

The mother's imprisonment can result in a complete disruption to family life. The separation is harmful for mothers and children which become innocent victims of the decision taken over their mother.

The average age of the majority of imprisoned women in Europe is between 20 and 40 and as a consequence the women are likely to be or become mothers. When they are already mothers at the time of their arrest, they are often the primary or the only carers of their children.

According to Rachel Taylor, in the United Kingdom in 2002:

- " - 66% of female prisoners were mothers;
- 55% had at least one child under 16. Over 1/3 of the mothers had one or more children under 5 years old;
- 34% of mothers were single parents before prison, with the proportion rising to 43% for those who expected to be single parent on release."

A. Mothers

Concern over their children is cited by women in custody as one of the most important factors in causing them depression and anxiety, and in leading to self-harm. The study conducted on behalf of the European Commission³ confirms that "losses and ruptures due to separation from [...] children were very much emphasised by all country reports as a major source of pain in prison for the women".

Prisoners who have failed as citizens can succeed as parents and furthermore, success as parent can help them to become better citizens. Studies have proved that good family links are important at the time of the release notably because having a stable family environment to

¹General Comment No. 28: Equality of rights between men and women (article 3), 29/03/2000

[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/13b02776122d4838802568b900360e80?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/13b02776122d4838802568b900360e80?Opendocument)

² Adopted by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Geneva in 1955, and approved by the Economic and Social Council resolution 663 C (XXIV) of 31 July 1957 and 2076 (LXII) of 13 May 1977 http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h_comp34.htm

³ "Women, Integration and Prison: an Analysis of the Processes of the Socio-Labour Integration of Women Prisoners in Europe", MIP project, coordinated by SURT, Associació de dones per la Reinserció Laboral (January 2005). http://mip.surt.org/en/final_results.html

return is a major disincentive to recidivism¹.

B. Children

Several studies have noted the difficulties involved in making any generalisations about the impact on children of separation from their parents as a result of imprisonment². The extent to which a child will be affected by parental incarceration depends on a large number of variables: the age at which the parent-child separation occurs, the length of separation, the child's familiarity with his or her new caregiver, and the degree of stigma that the child's community associates with imprisonment³. Keeping a baby with his mother raises complex issues about the facilities available for such children to ensure their own appropriate development – physical, mental and emotional, including their interaction with external people (more especially other children).

The Council of Europe recommends, in a report published in 2000, the development of "small scale secure and semi-secure units with social services support for the small number of mothers who do require such custody, where children can be cared for in a child-friendly environment and where the best interests of the child will be paramount, but where security can be offered to the public"⁴.

Even in the cases where special mother and baby units are provided, these are often very limited in numbers. These units are expensive to fund and as a result supply is lower than demand.

C. Visits of the children in prison:

Visits are a vital way of maintaining meaningful family relationships to prisoners, and this opportunity should be offered as soon as possible. A study in France found that if an offender had no contact with a child during the first six months of detention, no further contact with the child ensued.⁵

The preservation of family ties plays an important role in the prevention of recidivism and social reintegration of prisoners. However, a certain number of factors such as inflexible visiting conditions and unfriendly visiting environments can cause a disruption in family relationships and contact with children.

The challenge is to create an environment that balances both the needs of security and of good family contact (flexible visiting conditions, visit room allowing some freedom of movement and family privacy, friendly environment for children etc).

Preparing the future: social and professional reintegration

¹ Oliver Robertson's study cited previously.

² Oliver Robertson observes, *ibid.*, p.11

³ "Forgotten Families - the impacts of imprisonment" in Family Matters, Ann Cunningham, Winter 2001, p.36-37.

⁴ <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc00/EDOC8762.htm>

⁵ Relais Enfants-Parents (1999) *Maintien des liens en détention*, quoted in Liz Ayre et al., *Children of imprisoned Parents: European Perspectives of Good Practices*, 2006, p.48

Prisons have to fulfil two essential and complementary missions:

- the protection of the public from people who have had dangerous or at least punishable behaviours and;
- the reintegration of the convicted persons in the society, at the time of their release.

A. Education, training and employment:

Statistics on women's prisoners suggest a generally low level of education and a professional skills deficit. In the UK for instance, "47% have no educational qualifications. Whilst 2 % of the general population have been excluded from school, 33% of sentenced women prisoners were excluded from school"¹. If the time spent in prison is to be used to prepare the inmates for a more stable life after their release, education should be an important tool in that purpose.

Because of limited resources (staff and finance) prisons in Europe are not able to compensate for all educational and skill deficits but should at least offer all prisoners the possibility to acquire the basic educational skills that are necessary for their future social reintegration.

In many European prisons a division is observed between vocational training for women and the demands of the labour market. Most prisons offer a feminized job training limited to the development of the skills and abilities traditionally attributed to women in the cultural and societal female role (dressmaking, hairdressing, cleaning, textiles, embroidery, etc.). These low paid activities do not receive a highly valued response in the labour market and thus may favour the perpetuation of social inequalities as well as undermine social and professional integration.

Prison authorities should be encouraged to provide high quality vocational training measures that are adapted to the labour market needs as well as diversified employment opportunities free from gender stereotypes. The collaboration of prison institutions with external firms for the employment of prisoners should also be promoted as part of the prisoner's rehabilitation process.

B. Social inclusion

Upon leaving prison most prisoners have to face a broad range of crucial problems such as ensure housing, regular income, heal relationships with and provide for children or other dependent family members.

Successful social inclusion of prisoners must be prepared during and after imprisonment with the cooperation of social services and other relevant organizations in order to ensure a smooth transition from prison to liberty. Particular attention must be granted to the psychological preparation (processing of crime, handling of traumas and addictions through appropriate psychological support and treatment) and to the provision of social support for release (working out positive projects etc.)

¹ see http://www.quaker.org/qcea/prison/Country%20Reports/UK_England%20and%20Wales_%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	28.1.2008
Result of final vote	+: 27 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Edit Bauer, Hiltrud Breyer, Edite Estrela, Věra Flasarová, Lissy Gröner, Lívia Járóka, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Esther De Lange, Pia Elda Locatelli, Astrid Lulling, Siiri Oviir, Doris Pack, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Zita Pleštinská, Teresa Riera Madurell, Eva-Britt Svensson, Anne Van Lancker, Anna Záborská
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Corina Crețu, Anna Hedh, Elisabeth Jeggle, Christa Klaß, Marusya Ivanova Lyubcheva
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Petru Filip, Eva Lichtenberger, José Ribeiro e Castro, María Sornosa Martínez